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PATENT

ISOLATED JUNCTION STRUCTURE AND METHOD OF MANUFACTURE

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ISOLATED JUNCTION STRUCTURE AND METHOD OF MANUFACTURE

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Background of the Invention

Field of the Invention

The invention relates to generally to semiconductor structures and processes, and more particularly to a reduced junction capacitance semiconductor structure and a method of manufacture.

Background

Advances in semiconductor process technology and digital system architecture have led to integrated circuits having increased operating frequencies. Unfortunately, higher operating frequencies result in undesirable increases in power consumption. Power consumption is a significant problem in integrated circuit design generally, and particularly in large scale, high speed products such as processors and microprocessors.

Nonetheless, the trend of integrating more functions on a single substrate while operating at ever higher frequencies goes on unabated.

One way to improve integrated circuit performance, is by reducing the loading capacitance of metal-oxide-semiconductor field effect transistors (MOSFETs). Transistor loading capacitance generally has three components, intrinsic gate capacitance, overlap capacitance, and junction capacitance. To reduce junction capacitance, MOSFETs have been constructed on an insulating substrate. This is often referred to as silicon-on-insulator (SOI). Typical SOI processes reduce junction capacitance by isolating junctions from the substrate by interposing a thick buried oxide layer. However, short-channel MOSFETs constructed with thick buried oxide layers isolating their junctions from the substrate, tend to have poor punch-through characteristics, poor short-channel characteristics and other effects related to the floating body.

What is needed is a semiconductor structure having reduced junction capacitance and while maintaining good device characteristics. What is further needed is a method of manufacturing such a semiconductor structure.

5 Summary of the Invention

Briefly, a MOSFET structure in which the channel region is contiguous with the semiconductor substrate while the source and drain junctions are substantially isolated from the substrate, includes a dielectric volume formed adjacent and subjacent to portions of the source and drain regions.

10 In a further aspect of the invention, a process for forming an isolated junction in a bulk semiconductor includes forming a dielectric volume adjacent and subjacent to portions of the source and drain regions.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 is a cross-sectional view, in the channel length direction, of a conventional field effect transistor.

Fig. 2(a) is a schematic cross-sectional view, in the channel length direction, of a field effect transistor where the source and drain junctions are isolated from the body in accordance with the present invention.

Fig. 2(b) is a schematic cross-sectional view, in the channel length direction, of an alternative embodiment of the present invention wherein a field effect transistor has source and drain junctions that are isolated from the body.

Fig. 2(c) is a schematic cross-sectional view, in the channel width direction, of the field effect transistor shown in Fig. 2(b).

25 Figs. 3(a) - (i) are schematic cross-sectional views illustrating the various stages of manufacturing a field effect transistor having an isolated junction structure.

Detailed Description

30 Terminology

The terms, chip, integrated circuit, monolithic device, semiconductor device, and microelectronic device, are often used interchangeably in this field.

The present invention is applicable to all the above as they are generally understood in the field.

The terms metal line, interconnect line, trace, wire, conductor, signal path and signaling medium are all related. The related terms listed above, are generally interchangeable, and appear in order from specific to general. In this field, metal lines are sometimes referred to as traces, wires, lines, interconnect or simply metal. Metal lines, generally aluminum (Al), an alloy of Al and copper (Cu), or Cu, are conductors that provide signal paths for coupling or interconnecting, electrical circuitry. Conductors other than metal are available in microelectronic devices. Materials such as doped polysilicon, doped single-crystal silicon (often referred to simply as diffusion, regardless of whether such doping is achieved by thermal diffusion or ion implantation), titanium (Ti), molybdenum (Mo), and refractory metal silicides are examples of other conductors.

Overview

Previously known SOI structures have isolated MOSFETs entirely from the bulk substrate by forming a thick buried oxide layer between the MOSFET and the substrate. However, the thick buried oxide layer prevents the electric field originating at the drain junction from terminating in the substrate. Instead the field extends to the source junction. This results in poor punch-through and short-channel characteristics for short-channel SOI MOSFETs. Additionally, a fully isolated SOI MOSFET suffers from the floating body effect and therefore integrated circuits built with these transistors are less stable in operation than those built with conventional transistors. The floating body effect occurs when the body node is not tied to a particular voltage and therefore the threshold voltage, V_t , of transistors in the body fluctuate as charge is coupled in and out of the floating node during operation. Because this coupling effect is typically time-dependent, the floating body effect also contributes to transient and hysteresis phenomena.

The present invention overcomes these problems with a structure, as well as a method for fabricating this structure, wherein the structure includes a junction isolation region that substantially reduces parasitic junction capacitance in MOSFETs while maintaining a physically contiguous connection between the MOSFET channel region and the body region in a bulk semiconductor substrate.

Structure

Referring to Fig. 2(a), an example of an isolated junction structure in accordance with the present invention is shown wherein the source and drain regions of MOSFETs are surrounded by junction isolation regions. The junction isolation regions are located adjacent and subjacent the source and drain regions.

More particularly, a substrate **202** has pedestals **206** integrally formed therein. Pedestals **206** are T-shaped when viewed in cross-section. T-shaped pedestals **206** have a stem portion and a top portion. MOSFETs in accordance with the present invention include a gate insulator **208** superjacent the top portion of T-shaped pedestals **206**, and a gate electrode **210** overlying the gate insulator. Distal ends of the top portion of T-shaped pedestals **206** which are not covered by gate **210**, are implanted with impurities to form source/drain junctions **204**. Gate insulator **208** is typically a silicon oxide, gate electrode **210** is typically polysilicon. Source/drain junctions **204** can include p-type dopants such as boron, or n-type dopants such as arsenic or phosphorous.

The space adjacent and subjacent source/drain regions **204** electrically isolates the junctions from substrate **202** and is referred to herein as the junction isolation region. By isolating source/drain junctions **204** from substrate **202**, the parasitic junction capacitance, conventionally associated with reversed biased junctions, is substantially reduced. This junction isolation region is typically filled, at least partially, with a dielectric to provide mechanical strength for layers subsequently formed in the course of manufacturing an integrated circuit. As shown in Fig 2(a), the junction isolation region is partially filled with an electrically insulating material **212**. Air gaps **214** are formed under source/drain junctions

204 and adjacent to the stem portion of T-shaped pedestals **206**, as shown in Fig. 2(a).

Referring to Fig. 2(b), an alternative embodiment of an isolated junction structure in accordance with the present invention is shown which is similar to the embodiment of Fig. 2(a), except that an oxide liner **211** is present on the inner surfaces of the junction isolation regions, and a nitride spacer **203** is adjacent each distal end of the top portions of the T-shaped pedestal.

Those skilled in the art having the benefit of this disclosure will appreciate that numerous variations of the inventive junction isolation structure are possible, for example, oxide liner **211** may be present and nitride spacer **203** may be absent. Alternatively, nitride spacer **203** may be present and oxide liner **211** may be absent. In further alternative embodiments, other materials, for example silicon oxides, can be used to form the spacers. In still further alternative embodiments, the junction isolation region may be formed along particular portions of the source/drain region rather than around its entire perimeter.

Fig. 2(c) shows a different cross-sectional view of the embodiment of the present invention shown in Fig. 2(b). This view is across the channel width direction of the MOSFET. As shown, the junction isolation structure also provides a region that undercuts the channel portion of the MOSFET. Trench fill material **212** provides structural support of the gate extensions. Gate extensions are those portions of the gate electrode material that extend past the edges of the source/drain region in the channel width direction.

Process

Referring to Figs. 3(a) - (i), an exemplary process flow in accordance with the present invention is described.

As shown in Fig. 3(a), a silicon dioxide layer **302** is deposited over a starting silicon substrate **304**. Silicon dioxide layer **302** is then patterned for trench isolation, as shown in Fig. 3(b). The patterned silicon dioxide is used as an etching mask. A first section **306** of a shallow trench is etched into silicon substrate **304** using patterned silicon dioxide layer **302** as etch barrier, i.e.,

mask. The depth of first section 306 of the trench is approximately the same as the desired depth of the junction that will be formed in a subsequent operation.

Subsequently, as shown in Fig. 3(c), a silicon nitride layer 308 is conformably deposited on the exposed trench structure. Silicon nitride layer 308 is typically formed by chemical vapor deposition. An anisotropic etch of silicon nitride layer 308 is performed to produce a SiN spacer 310 on the edge of the trench, but with the bottom Si substrate exposed, as shown in Fig. 3(d).

A Si selective isotropic etch is then performed to produce an undercut region 312, as shown in Fig. 3(e). This etch can be done either as a wet etch, a dry etch or a combination of the two. At this point in the process, SiN spacer 310 can be removed if desired, or it can be left and the process continued.

An advantage of removing the SiN spacer is that this tends to open up the trench opening so the subsequent filling will be easier. A second advantage of removing the SiN spacer is that SiN tends to produce a stress on Si that is greater than SiO induced stress, and therefore removal of the SiN spacer layer will likely reduce this film stress. A third advantage of removing the SiN spacer is that SiN has a higher dielectric constant than SiO and therefore tends to increase inter-line coupling capacitance. However, as will be recognized by those skilled in the art having the benefit of this disclosure, all these advantages need to be traded-off with the advantage of fewer processing steps, and less contamination of lateral trench, which are achieved by leaving the SiN spacers in place.

The trench is then cleaned. Cleaning of the trench is important so that any residual etchant will be removed, as the corrosive effect of the etchant on silicon substrate 304 can lead to reliability problems. If the undercut region 312 of the trenches have been formed by wet etching then moisture is likely to have been trapped and the trench must be completely dried. Drying of trapped moisture can be accomplished by heating the substrate in an inert gas such as nitrogen. Subsequently, a thermal oxidation is performed to produce a protective oxide 314 over the inner surface of the trench structure, as can be seen in Fig. 3(f).

The trench is then filled, typically with an oxide of silicon 316, using conventional trench filling processes. However, it is not necessary to fill all of undercut region 312. By leaving an air gap 318 within undercut region 312, as shown in Fig. 3(g), a greater reduction in junction capacitance is achieved. This is because the dielectric constant of air is lower than that of the oxides of silicon.

After the trench fill is performed, the surface is planarized, as shown in Fig. 3(h). Planarization is typically achieved either by etch back or chemical mechanical polishing (CMP). Subsequent to planarization of the surface, conventional processing steps can be used to form a gate insulator layer 319, gate electrode 320 and doped source/drain region 322 as shown in Fig. 3(i). In this way a MOSFET is formed having reduced junction capacitance.

Conclusion

Embodiments of the present invention include a junction isolation structure that substantially reduces parasitic junction capacitance in MOSFETs while maintaining a physically contiguous connection between the MOSFET channel region and the substrate region in a bulk semiconductor.

An advantage of the present invention is that parasitic capacitance associated with MOSFET source and drain junctions is reduced. As a consequence of reduced junction capacitance, integrated circuit embodying the present invention can be operated at higher frequencies without requiring additional power. Similarly, such integrated circuits can be operated at lower power because the need to charge and discharge parasitic capacitances has been obviated.

It will be understood by those skilled in the art having the benefit of this disclosure that the present invention can be embodied in various structures and process steps other than those of the illustrative embodiment. For example, alternative trench fill materials such as low dielectric constant polymers, or undoped polysilicon can be used. Similarly, silicon oxide and silicon nitride can be interchanged as masking and spacer material.

It will be understood that various other changes in the details, materials, and arrangements of the parts and steps which have been described and illustrated in order to explain the nature of this invention may be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the principles and scope of the invention
5 as expressed in the subjoined Claims.